

Section 23, Fasting during Ramadan, Rights of Property

To fast during the month of Ramadan—Prayer and supplication to God—Discipline to be observed during the month—Rights of property to be respected

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 183–185

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامُ مِسْكِينٍ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْفُرْقَانِ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَلِتُكْمِلُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَلِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

you, so that you may guard yourselves (against evil)."

184. "(Fast for) a certain number of days. But whoever among you is sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) the same number of other days, and for those who are hardly to do it, (there is) a redemption by feeding an indigent. But whoever volunteers to do good, it is better for him; and it is better for you that you fast, if you did (only) know."

185. "The month of Ramadan that wherein the Qur'an was sent down to be a guidance for mankind, and as clear signs of guidance and a criterion (between right and wrong). Therefore, whoever of you is present (at his home) during the month, he shall fast therein and whoever is sick or on a journey, he shall then (fast) the same number of other days; Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you; so you should complete the number (of days decreed), and exalt Allah for His having guided you, and that haply you might be grateful (to Him)."

Fasting, the Origin of Piety

Next to several important ordinances of Islam stated in the former verses, these current verses refer to another ordinance, i.e. fasting, which is one of the most serious acts of worship. The Qur'an, with the same tone of emphasis that was applied for the previous verses, says:

"O' you who have Faith! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you..."

Then, immediately after this, it refers to the philosophy of this humanizing worship and, in a short but meaningful sentence, says:

"...so that you may guard yourselves (against evil),"

According to what the Late Kolayni says in his famous book (Al-Kafi), piety is rendered into one's restriction from sin. Most sins originate from wrath and lust. Fasting brings the extravagance of this instinct under control, which, consequently, decreases corruption and increases piety. ¹

Yes, fasting is a great effective factor in the process of training the spirit of piety in all dimensions of every field; this will be addressed in detail later.

Since this worship is accompanied with deprivation from some material pleasures and one must suffer some troubles especially when it is in summer, there are different particular meanings used in the above verse to make the mind of believers ready for the acceptance of this decree.

To attract the attentions and to make the subject an interesting one for the addressees, it begins with the phrase:

"O' you who have Faith!"

Then, it refers to the statement of the fact that fasting is not appointed only for Muslim Ummah but it had been practiced by the former nations, too.

Finally, the philosophy of fasting, and that the fruitful results of this Divinely ordered duty return totally to you, is stated.

A tradition narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as) says:

"The pleasure found in (the phrase: 'O' you who have Faith! ' is so that) it has removed the tiredness of this worship and effort." 2

In the next verse, again, in order to reduce the hardship of fasting, it states a few other commands regarding this. It initiates the subject thus:

"(Fast for) a certain number of days...."

It is not so that you be obliged to fast all the year through or a considerable part of it, but fasting is for only a small section of the year.

Another matter is that:

"..But whoever among you is sick or on a journey, then (he shall fast) the same number of other days..."

Then there comes the third group, those who are absolutely unable to fast, such as elderly men, elderly women, the constant patients with chronic diseases, where it says:

"... and for those who are hardly able to do it, (there is) a redemption by feeding an indigen.."
"..But whoever volunteers to do good, it is better for him..."

And finally, at the end of the verse, the fact is restated, which itself is another emphasis on the philosophy of fasting, thus:

"... And it is better for you that you fast, if you did (only) know."

This meaning also refers to the fact that the worship of fasting, as other worships, does not add anything to the Glory and Dignity of *Allah* but all its merits are for the worshipper. Islamic traditions confirm the same meaning, too.

The holy Prophet (S) has said: *"He who fasts during the fasting month for the sake of Allah, all his sins will be forgiven."*3

It is also cited in a divine tradition that *Allah* says: *"Fasting is Mine, and I do reward it."*4

Also, in another tradition it is narrated from the holy Prophet (S) who said:

*"There is an alm for everything, and the alms of bodies is fasting."*⁵

Hence, it makes clear that the phrase: **"...it is better for you that you fast..."** addresses all those who fast, not only a particular group of them. The last verse of this group of verses introduces the time of fasting and a part of its ordinances and their philosophies. At first it says that those certain days that you must fast are the month of Ramadan, and:

"The month of Ramadan is that wherein the Qur'an was sent down..."

And this Qur'an is the same that is:

"...to be a guidance for mankind, and as clear signs of guidance and a criterion (between right and wrong)..."

Then again, the command for the passengers and the sick is restated and, as an emphasis, it says:

"... Therefore, whoever of you is present (at his home) during the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or on a journey, he shall then (fast) the same number of other days..."

The repetition of the ordinance of the sick and passenger in this verse and the previous one may be for the purpose that some people, thinking that not to fast is absolutely a disgraceful action, insist on fasting when they are sick or are on a journey, so the Qur'an, by this repetition, makes the Muslims understand that fasting is a divine duty for the safe and sound persons while, in the same manner, not fasting is also a divine command for the sick and passengers (with their proper conditions) so that the offense of it is a sin.

At the end of the verse, it pays attention to the philosophy of the divine legislation of fasting once more, and says:

"... Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you..."

It points to this fact that although fasting is apparently a kind of strictness and limitation, its conclusion is ease and tranquility of man, both spiritually and materially.

This sentence may hint to this matter that the Divine commands are not similar to the commands of tyrants. In the case that the fulfillment of an action is very labour some, *Allah* enjoins an easier duty to be performed. Therefore, the ordinance of fasting, with all its importance, was exempted for the sick, passengers, and those feeble ones unable to perform it.

Then, it adds:

"...So you should complete the number (of days decreed)..."

This means that everyone who is safe should fast one month a year because it is necessary for his health. For this reason, if a person is sick or on a journey during the month of Ramadan, the one must belate the accomplishment of fasting those days until the same number is completed.

Even menstruous women, who are excused from establishing prayers, are not exempted from fasting at a later date.

So, in the final sentence of the verse, it says: ***"...and exalt Allah for His having guided you, and that haply you might be grateful (to Him)."***

Yes, we must exalt *Allah* for the guidance He has endowed upon us, and be thankful to Him for all those blessings He has mercifully given us.

It is noteworthy that the act of thanksgiving is mentioned with the term 'haply', while the matter of exalting *Allah* is stated conclusively.

This difference of statement may be for the reason that the fulfillment of this worship (fasting) is, at any rate, the exaltation of the Essence of *Allah*, but thanksgiving, which is the same as using the blessings if, their proper sites and taking benefit from the effects and practical issues of fasting, has some conditions which will not be fulfilled unless those conditions be obtained, the most important of which are: a perfect sincerity, the recognition of the reality of fasting, and acknowledgement about the philosophy of fasting.

Explanations

Fasting and Its Educational, Social, and Hygienical Effects

1-From the point of various affects that fasting may spiritually and materially produces in the unity of man; it has different dimensions that can be discussed. The ethical dimension and the philosophy of fasting are the most important of all.

Fasting makes the soul of man elegant, then strengthens his will, and moderates his instincts.

The one who observes the fast, although he is hungry and thirsty, must restrain himself from eating food and drinking water, and also, from the pleasure of sexual intercourse when he is fasting. One must prove that he/she can hold the rein of his/her restive passions and is able to dominate his/her desires and lusts.

Indeed, the most important philosophy of fasting is this very spiritual status of it. A person who has many kinds of food and drinks available at his reach to use of them whenever he is hungry or thirsty cannot be so tolerant at the time he is in lack of them.

But the one who observes the fast is like a plant which grows in a dry desert. It resists when water is rare, stands steadfast against strong storms and intense cold. Such people can deal with deprivations

when they are challenged with them, and, therefore, can be firm and perseverant.

Fasting trains the soul of a person. With temporary restrictions, fasting gives man perseverance, authority in will, ability of challenging with severe deprivations, and, since it controls restive instincts, it showers light and inner purity into the heart.

However, fasting causes man to promote from the animate nature so that he can ascend unto the rank and the world of angels.

The phrase: "...**haply you might be grateful (to Him)**" may point to the same fact.

And, also, the famous tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (as) is another hint to the same matter which says: *"Fasting is a protector from Fire."* 6

Another tradition narrated from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) says that the Prophet (S) was asked what they would do that Satan be banished, and he (S) answered: *"Fasting blackens his face; charity breaks his back; the love in (the path of) Allah, and persistence in righteous deeds put an end to him, and seeking (Allah's) forgiveness cuts his aorta."* 7

When Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), stating the philosophy of worship, speaks about fasting and he, says: *"(Allah has laid down) fasting as a trial of the people in their sincerity..."* 8

In another tradition, the holy Prophet (S) has said: *"Verily, there is a door for (entering) Heaven by the name of 'Al-Rayyan, (quenched of thirst) none enters therein but fasting ones."* 9

Explaining this tradition, the late Sadduq cites in his book 'Ma'any-ul-Akhbar' the reason that this name has been taken for that door of Heaven is that much of the toil of a fasting person is because of his thirst. So when the fasting ones enter this door, they will be so saturated that they will never become thirsty thereafter.

The Social Effect of Fasting

Every intelligent person realizes that fasting works as a lesson of equality among the members of a society. By practicing the religious command, the rich realize perceptibly both the state of the hungry and the deprived of their society, and, with saving in their daily meals, can help them well.

It is possible; of course, that by explaining the status of the hungry and the deprived to the rich, it will make them understand that status, but if this condition becomes perceptible and objective, it will react more effectively. Fasting gives this great social subject a perceptible form to those who observe it.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as) in a well-known tradition that Hisham ibn Hakam asked him about the reason for the divine legislation of this ordinance when he (as) said:

"Allah has enjoined fasting in order to settle equivalence between the rich and the poor, and this is for

the sake that the rich feel the taste of hunger and, consequently, be merciful toward the poor (by giving them their rights). And, since the things are usually available for the rich, then Allah, the Exalted, is pleased when equivalence is erected between His servants. So, He, thereby, has ordained that the rich feel the taste of hunger and pain so that they feel sympathy for the weak and be merciful toward the hungry." 10

Verily, if the populations of rich countries throughout the world customarily fast a few days a year and feel the taste of hunger, will there still remain so many hungry people in the world?

Fasting and Its Hygienical & Remedial Effects

In modern medicine, as well as the old one, the miraculous effect of 'abstinence' in curing kinds of sicknesses have been proven so evidently that it cannot be deniable. Few of physicians have not pointed out this fact in their scientific notes.

As all of us know, the reason of the origin of many diseases is gluttony, because the unabsorbed extra materials of food-stuffs in the form of obtrusive tallow or additional sugar in blood remain in different parts of the body.

These additional materials, inside the levies of muscles of body, are, in fact, as some putrid oozy sites where kinds of microbes of some infectious diseases can grow. The best way of defending against these sicknesses is to annihilate them by means of abstinence and fasting.

Besides this property of fasting, which causes the additional and unabsorbed materials of the body to be burnt; fasting is a considerable factor for servicing the body with giving a rest to the organs of digestion.

This rest is extremely necessary for these organs. They are the most important parts of the body and are continuously busy working throughout the year.

It is clear that one who observes the fast, as Islam advises, ought not to eat too much food at the time of breaking the fast and just before the dawn during the fasting month of Ramadan in order to enjoy the result of the hygienical effect of fasting, otherwise the consequence may become contrary.

Alexy Sufurin, a Russian scientist, writes in his book that by means of fasting a specific result can be obtained in treating diseases such as: anemia, dyspepsia, chronic extended enteritis, furuncle and inner abscess, consumption, rheumatism, gout (padagra, chiragra, gonagra), dropsy, sciatica, some ophthalmic diseases, diabetes, skin diseases, renal diseases, and so on.

Treatment through fasting is not limited to the foregoing diseases alone, but also the sicknesses concerning the fundamentals of the body involving the bodily cells like cancer, syphilis, and plague can be cured by means of fasting. 11

The holy Prophet (S) is narrated to have said in a famous tradition: '*Fast to be healthy.*' 12

Again, in another tradition he (S) has said: *"The stomach is the site of all ailments, while dietary (abstinence) is the head of all remedies."* 13

Fasting in Former Religions

The existing Torah and Bible indicate that the Jews and the Christians had fasting, too, (Math.6: 16, 17; and Luke 5: 33–35). The followers of some other religions used to fast in times of sorrow and affliction.

In the Lexicon of the Bible it is cited that fasting, in general, has always been practiced among every nation and in any religion at the time of an unexpected sorrow or disaster. 14

It is also caught from the Torah that Moses (as) had forty days of fasting. It is cited in the Old Testament thus: **"When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of covenant which the Lord made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water."** 15

Also, at the time of repentance and seeking the pleasure of the Lord, the Jews fasted. So, it is cited in the Lexicon of the Bible that when the Jews got the opportunity that they wanted to state their weakness and humility before the Lord, they fasted in order that they confess their faults and to obtain the pleasure of His Essence by means of that fasting and repentance. 16

It is probable that 'the Great Fasting with atonement', which was for one particular day a year, was common among the Jewish people. They had, of course, some other temporary days to fast in remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem, etc., too. 17

As the Bible indicates, Jesus (as) had also forty days of fasting. It says thus:

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2) And when he had fasted forty days and nights, he was afterward an hungred." 18

It is also understood from the Evangel that the disciples of Jesus used to fast. It says: **"33) And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink? 34) And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? 35) But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast those days."** 19

Again, it is cited in the Lexicon of the Bible that the lives of disciples and believers, in old times, were full of negation of pleasure and tremendous toils accompanied with observing the fast. 20

Thus, the Qur'anic sentence saying: "... **as it was prescribed for those before you...**" is also confirmed whit many historical religious evidences existing in other divine religions even after they had been perverted.

Ramadan, the Transcendent Month

The month of Ramadan has been selected for fasting because it has a preference to other lunar months of the year. In the verse under discussion, this preference is stated such that the Qur'an, which is the Book of Guidance for humankind and, with its commands and legislations, has separated the right from wrong to lead man toward prosperity, was revealed in the month of Ramadan. Besides that, both some verses of the Qur'an and the Islamic literature indicate that all the great heavenly Books, such as the Torah, the Bible, the Psalms of David, the Books of Ibrahim, and the Qur'an, have all totally been sent down in this month.

In this respect, Imam al-Sadiq (as) said: *"The Torah was sent down on the sixth of Ramadan, the Bible on the twelfth, the Psalms on the eighteenth and the Qur'an by the Night of Destiny (Laylat-ul-Qadr) in Ramadan."* 21

Thus, the month of Ramadan had always been the month of the great heavenly Books to be sent down. This month had been the month of education, since training without teaching and practice is fruitless. The training aim of Fasting should also be parallel with the more and the utmost profound knowledge about the divine instructions so that it wipes out the soul and self of man from sin.

Once, on the last Friday of Sha'ban, the Prophet of Islam (S) delivered a sermon about the significant of the month of Ramadan to prepare his companions for receiving this sacred month. In that great sermon he (S) said:

"O' people! Allah's month has approached you laden with blessing, mercy and forgiveness. It is a month which Allah regards as the best of all months."

"Its days, in the sight of Allah, are the best of days; its nights are the best of nights; and its hours are the best of hours."

"It is a month in which you are invited to be the guests of Allah, and you are regarded during it as worthy of Allah's Grace."

"In this month, your breathing praises Allah, and your sleeping adores Him. Your deeds (of worship) are accepted, and your pleas are answered therein."

"Therefore, ask Allah, your Lord, in sincere intentions and pure hearts to enable you to observe the fast and to recite His Book (the Qur'an) during this month, for only a wretch is the one who is deprived of Allah's Forgiveness in this great month."

"Let your hunger and thirst during it remind you of the hunger and the thirst of the Day of Judgment. Give alms to the poor and indigent among you, respect your elderly and be kind to your youngsters, and strengthen blood-kinship of yours."

"Safeguard your tongues (from sin), do not look at what Allah has prohibited your eyes from watching it,

and do not listen to what your ears are forbidden to hear. Be kind to the orphans of other people, so that your own orphans be consequently given affections, too...."

The Principle of ' No Hardship'

In the above mentioned verse, this matter was pointed out that *Allah*, Will is not that you be troubled and uneasy, but He ordained so that you feel ease. It is certain that this ordinance here is about the proposition of fasting and its benefits together with the concerning commandment due to passengers and sick persons.

But, regarding its universality, this ordinance has been used as a general principle upon all Islamic rules, and the verse has been taken as a reference for it which is known as the rule of ' No Hardship' (la-haraj) among jurisprudents.

This religious rule says that the foundation of the Islamic legislation is not based upon hardship. So, if, somewhere, an ordinance creates intense hardship, it can be exempted temporarily. For instance, the jurisprudents have said that when performing one's ablution or standing erect, and the like of them, due to establishing prayers requires much pain, it changes to dry ablution and prayers in sitting position.

Concerning the lack of hardship in Islam, it is also stated in **Surah Hajj No.22 verse 78**, thus: ***"...He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion."***

Also, another hint to this subject is the famous tradition of the Messenger of *Allah* (S) where he says: *"I was appointed to a tolerant and facile religion."* 22

Conclusion

In these verses, the philosophy of fasting accompanied with some concerning ordinances are stated for the benefit of Muslim believers to follow.

By the way, fasting had been in vogue in every religion in some form or other. It is one of the cardinal doctrines of the practice of the faith, in Islam, taking its rank next only to the obligatory five times daily prayers. These verses of the Qur'an show that fasting was enjoined by all the prophets of *Allah* who preceded the holy Prophet Muhammad (S).

It should also be noted that fasting in Islam is to train to suppress our natural appetites and shun evil. It does not mean abstaining only from food but from every kind of evil. Abstention from food is only a step towards the realization that if one has to abstain from that which is lawful, how much more he must abstain from what had been forbidden by *Allah*. T

he main object of the Islamic fast is to purify the conduct and character and get the soul charged with divine attributes of *Allah* n the practical life for one complete month. It helps the Muslims to guard themselves against evil as well as conditioning with restrain by habituating themselves to suffer physical

affliction and self-control and resistance and fortitude which they must always be prepared to suffer in the defense of faith and the faithful.

On the other hand, since Islam is a tolerant and easy religion, fasting is not allowed for those who are on lawful journey. Or, it is exempted for Muslims in the case of the risk of any illness being aggravated, testified by a reliable doctor. This status is for that Islam does not will intense hardship for its followers.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 186

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

186. "When My servants ask you concerning Me, then (say unto them:) verily I am nigh: I answer the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Me; so (they should) hearken unto My call, and believe in Me, in order that they may be led aright."

Occasion of Revelation

Once someone asked the holy Prophet (S) whether *Allah* was near so that they could whisper to Him or He was far so that they would speak to Him loudly. Then, the above verse was revealed (to answer that *Allah* is close to His servants.). 23

An Armament Called Supplication

Since one of the means of approaching to *Allah* for His servants is the phenomenon of supplication, next to the statement of a great part of Islamic ordinances in the former verses, this verse pays particular attention to this subject.

This phenomenon is a general process for all supplicants and those who want to resort to *Allah*, yet its occurrence among the verses related to fasting gives it an additional concept. The reason is that the spirit of every worship is obtaining nearness to *Allah* by the sincere wailing or cry of the heart.

This verse, addressing the Prophet (S) says:

"When My servants ask you concerning Me, then (say unto them) verily I am nigh"

I am closer (to them) than they may consider. I am closer than you to yourself; and closer than your life-vein to you. In another occurrence in the Qur'an, *Allah*, referring to man, says: **"...and We are nearer to him than his life-vein"** ²⁴.

Then, it adds:

"...I answer the prayer of every supplicant when he calls on Me..."

"...so (they should) hearken unto My call..."

"...and believe in Me..."

"...in order that they may be led aright..."

It is noteworthy that, in this verse, *Allah* has pointed to His pure Essence seven times, and to His servants, too, seven times. Thus, He has illustrated thereby His utmost connection, nearness and love unto His servants.

'Abdullah-ibn-Sanan says that he heard that Imam al-Sadiq (as) said: *"Try to pray very much because it is the key of Allah's forgiveness and the means of obtaining any want. There are some blessings and graces with Allah that reaching them is impossible but via supplication. And, do know that any door which you knock it will finally be opened."* 25

Yes, He is near to us. How can He be far from us while His site is between the self of man and his heart, as the Qur'an says: ***"...and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart..."*** 26.

How Are Supplications Answered?

Before that we expect our supplications be answered, we must practice purifying our heart and soul, repent from our sins, and follow the way of the divine leaders' career.

1- Imam al-Sadiq (as) is narrated who has said: *"Be aware, anyone of you, not to ask his Lord any thing of the necessities for this world and the coming one unless the one initiates with praising Allah and paying tribute to Him, and with benediction upon the Prophet and his progeny (S). Thereafter, he ought to confess his sins (before Him) and then asks his want."* 27

2- A person should strive to sanctify his life from properties that he has obtained by usurpation, oppression and cruelty so that his food-stuff would not be from any unlawful origin. There is a tradition from the holy Prophet (S) who has said: *"He who wishes that his supplications be answered must surely purify his food and his earnings (to be lawful)."* 28

3- A person should not restrain from struggling against corruption and inviting others unto right and truth, since those who abandon the act of enjoining right and forbidding wrong, their supplications are scarcely ever answered.

It is narrated from the Prophet (S) who said: *"You should enjoin right and forbid wrong, or Allah may set up your wicked ones as absolute masters over your good ones. Then, whatsoever the good pray it will not be answered."* 29

The abandonment of this great duty, in fact, creates some disorders in the society, the result of which is

boldness of the vicious of the society with no defense therein. In this case, supplication for the removal of its fruits is useless, because those evil effects are the direct consequence of the behaviour of those people themselves.

4– True faith, righteous deed, faithfulness and uprightness are some other conditions of the fulfillment of supplications. Hence, the person who does not keep his promise before *Allah* should not expect to be involved among those whom *Allah* has promised to answer.

Once, someone went to Imam Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) and complained about why his supplications were not answered though *Allah* had said: **"...call upon Me, I will answer you..."** (Surah Al-Mu'min, No.40, verse 60).

In answer to that question, the holy Imam (as) said: *"Your hearts (minds) have acted treacherously toward eight characteristics, (so, your supplications are not answered):*

1– You have known *Allah* but you have not paid His right such that has been enjoined upon you. Therefore, your cognition does not benefit you anything.

2– You have believed in His Messenger while thereafter, you have opposed his Sunnah. You are in his religion, then, where is the fruit of your Faith?

3– Surely you have recited his revealed book but you do not act accordingly. And, you said: **"We have heard and we obey"** 30, whereas you opposed it then.

4– You say you fear the Fire (of Hell), While you always commit your own sins, and you approach it thereby; then, where is your fear?

5– You say you are eager and interested in Heaven (the Divine reward) but you always do some things which send you away from it; so, where is that inclination that you have to it?

6– Verily, you eat the blessing of *Allah* but you do not show gratitude about it.

7– Certainly *Allah* has ordered you to be the enemy of Satan, and He has said: **"Surely the Satan is your enemy, so take him for an enemy..."** (Surah Fatir No. 35 verse 6). Verbally you claim that you are his enemy but actually you make friends with Satan without opposing him.

8– You have put the faults of people before your eyes and your own ones at your backs. Then, what supplication of yours can be answered for you with this case that you yourselves have closed its doors? So, fear *Allah* and improve your deeds, purify your intentions, and enjoin right and forbid wrong. It is in this case that *Allah* answers you your supplications." 31

This expressive tradition clearly says: the promise of *Allah* to answer supplications is a conditioned promise, not an absolute one. It is conditioned that you fulfill your promises and covenants, too; whereas

you have broken promises in eight ways. So, if you put an end to this breach of promise, your call will be answered.

Practicing upon the foregoing eight instructions which are, in fact, the conditions of supplications to be answered, is enough for training Man and employing his faculties alongside a productive and fruitful path.

5). Another condition of the answering of supplication is that it should be accompanied by struggle, effort and studious action. Imam Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) says: *"He who prays but does not exert effort is like the one who shoots without a bow-string."* 32

Regarding to the fact that a bow-string is the means of sending an arrow towards the target, the function of effort and action in the efficacy of prayer is made manifest.

All the aforementioned five conditions illustrate this reality that not only supplication should not substitute the natural phenomena and ordinary means of obtaining the goal, but for its being answered, a general change is also necessary to occur in the career of the supplicant.

His spirit should be renewed, and his former deeds must be reviewed so that the demanded results come into existence for the supplicant.

Thus, reverting to supplication or the efficacy of prayer does not at all exclude the necessity on the part of the supplicant of the use of the necessary external means of achieving the desired object. The connection between the practical means and prayer is indissoluble.

Any sincere seeker of an object will naturally look for the practical means to achieve it. In the search for the means one must endeavor as best as possible for him, employing all his native faculties, devoting the necessary time and attention to achieve the desired object.

When one is in his search for the means, open and hidden, he naturally desires guidance from the Higher Power from which nothing is hidden and for which nothing is impossible or difficult. Prayer blesses the supplicant by granting him the guidance necessary for the realization of the desire.

A Few Narrations Upon Supplication

1- It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as) who said Imam Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said: *"The most beloved deeds on the earth with Allah, Mighty and Glorious, is prayer; and the best worship is piety"*. Imam al-Sadiq (as) added that Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) was a man who used to pray very much. 33

2- Imam al-Sadiq (as) narrated from the Prophet (S) who said: *"Prayer is the believer's armour, the pillar of religion, and the (spiritual) light of the heavens and the earth."* 34

3- Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) said: *"Prayer is the keys of (safety and) success and the*

keys to (the doors of) prosperity. The best supplication is that which arises from a pure chest and a pious heart..". 35

4- The holy Prophet (S) said: "Shall I not lead you to a weapon which saves you from your enemies, and increases your sustenance (abundantly)?" They answered him positively. Then he said: **"Call your Lord both in night and day, because supplication is the armour of a believer."** 36

5- Imam al-Sadiq (as) has narrated from Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) who said: "Supplication is the shield of a believer; whenever you knock on a door very much, it will be opened for you." 37

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 187

أَحَلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتُمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

187. "It is made lawful for you to go in unto your wives on the night of the fasts; they are a garment for you and you are a garment for them. Allah knew that you used to act unfaithfully among yourselves, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and pardoned you. So now you may associate with them and seek what Allah prescribed for you. Eat and drink until the white thread (of dawn) becomes manifest unto you from the black thread (of night) at the dawn-break, then complete the fast till nightfall and do not approach them (your wives) while you are at your devotion in the mosques. These are limits (set by) Allah, therefore do not approach (violate) them. Thus Allah makes clear His Signs for mankind, so that they may guard themselves (against evil)."

Occasion of Revelation

It is so understood from the Islamic literature that at the advent of the revelation of the command of fasting, Muslims were allowed to eat a meal before sleeping at night. So, if anyone occasionally fell asleep at night and then awoke, eating and drinking was unlawful (*haram*) for the one.

Once, one of the companions of the Prophet (S) by the name of Mat'am-ibn Jubayr, who was a weak man, fasted in that situation. In the evening, he entered home for breaking the fast. When his wife went to prepare food for him, he fell asleep because of fatigue and weariness.

After some while he woke up and, then, he said he was not allowed to eat and he could not break the fast, and, therefore, with the same state of hunger, he slept. Next morning, in the state of fasting, he attended a place around Medina to dig ditches in order to prepare them for the battle of ahzab.

While he was in the effort and struggle of digging, he fainted as a result of hunger and weakness. Then, when the Prophet (S) came to him he was touched upon seeing his situation.

Also, a group of young Muslims, who could not control themselves, associated with their wives during the nights of Ramadan.

It was in that circumstance that the revelation was sent down and let Muslims eat and drink during the length of night and associate (sexual intercourse) with their own wives as well.

As it was mentioned in the occasion of revelation, at the advent of Islam, association with wives was forbidden during night and day in Ramadan. Eating and drinking after sleeping was also not permissible. That was, perhaps, a trial as well as a preparation for Muslims so that they would accept the ordinances of fasting.

The verse under discussion, which consists of four Islamic ordinances about fasting and the act of devotion in the mosques, initiates the matter thus:

"It is made lawful for you to go in unto your wives on the night of the fast..."

Then, it pays to the philosophy of this subject and says: ***"...they are a garment for you and you are a garment for them..."*** The primary thought or the meaning accommodated in the description of clothing used here relating to the mutual relation of husband and wife and the mutual comfort and protection they afford to each other, is superb and unique in its expression.

There cannot be a better description of the position of a man and wife and their relation to each other, which is unsurpassed in beauty.

Clothing, on one hand, protects man against heat and cold, and also against the danger of foreign bodies scraping or penetrating the skin. On the other hand, clothing not only covers the disgraces of the body, but also is an ornament for a person. The metaphor mentioned in this verse is a hint to all of these meanings.

Two spouses protect each other from deviations. They hide the faults and blemishes of each other. They provide the means of rest and tranquility for each other. Each of them is counted as the ornament of the other.

This meaning makes the utmost spiritual connection and coherence of man and woman clear as well as their nearness to each other. It also points to the equality of man and woman in this respect, since whatever thing is said about men equally, and with no change, is mentioned about women.

Then, –the Qur'an refers to the reason of the change of this divine law and says:

"Allah knew that you used to act unfaithfully among yourselves, so He has turned to you (mercifully) and pardoned you..."

Yes, in order that you commit no more sin, *Allah* mercifully made that duty easy for you and decreased the length of its restriction.

"...So now you may associate with them and seek what Allah prescribed for you...."

This matter is certainly not in the sense of obligation but it is permission after that state of prohibition. So, the idea can be taken as an evidence of permissibility.

The phrase: ***"...and seek what Allah prescribed for you..."*** points to this fact that utilizing this permission and reduction, which is on the path of the laws of creation and preservation of the regularity of 'seed permanence', is no problem at all.

Then, it refers to the second ordinance and says:

"...Eat and drink until the white thread (of dawn) becomes manifest unto you from the black thread (of night) at the dawn-break..."

Therefore, Muslims could eat and drink all the night long until the dawn when they would stop

Then the statement is upon the third ordinance, thus:

"...then complete the fast till nightfall..."

This statement is another emphasis on the prohibition of eating and drinking and sexual intercourse during the day time for those who observe the fast. It is an indicative point to the beginning and the end of a fast which begins from the dawn and ends at night.

Finally, it points to the fourth ordinance when it says:

"...and do not approach them (your wives) while you are at your devotion in the mosques...."

The statement of this ordinance is like an exception for the former ordinance, because in this situation, the length of which is at least three days, they fast but during this limited time they can have sexual intercourse neither in days nor at nights.

At the end of the verse, alluding to all the foregoing ordinances, it says:

"These are limits (set by) Allah, therefore do not approach (violate) them...."

Approaching the bounds is sometimes tempting and causes that man violates them and commits sins.

Yes,

"...Thus Allah makes clear His Signs for mankind, so that they may guard themselves (against evil)."

Explanation

Allah's Limits

As is was mentioned in the commentary of the above verses, the Holy Qur'an, after stating some ordinances about fasting and being at devotion, renders these –ordinances, as the 'limits set by *Allah*': the bounds between lawful (halal) and unlawful (haram) matters, and the limits between prohibited and permissible things.

It is noteworthy that the Qur'an does not say 'do not pass the limits', but it says: ***"do not approach them"***, because approaching the limits is tempting and sometimes, under the influence of lusts or because of being involved in mistakes, a person may violate them.

It is for this very reason that some Islamic laws forbid man from stepping into the situations that may cause him to slip and commit sins, such as taking part in a society of sinners, even though he himself does not share in it; or being with a non-relative, of the opposite sex in a lonely private place wherein no one can enter.

The term originally means 'to seclude oneself in a place, or to remain a long time beside something'. In religion it means keeping to the mosques for the purpose of worship. The duration of this retreat is three days during which the person fasts and abandons some pleasures.

This worship has a profound effect in purification of the soul and attending to the Providence. The manner and conditions of this worship are mentioned in the books of Islamic jurisprudence. This worship, of course, is essentially counted among the recommended deeds, but in some particular circumstances, exceptionally, it becomes obligatory.

At any rate, the verse under discussion refers to only one of its conditions because of its connection to the proposition of fasting, i.e. the lack of association with wives whether at night or in the daytime.

The Dawn

The term / fajn / basically means 'break open', hence the light of the dawn, which breaks the gloom of night with its bright advent, in the Qur'anic term is called / fajn /.

In the verse under discussion, in addition to the above term, the dawn has been rendered thus:

"...until the white thread (of dawn) becomes manifest unto you from the black thread (of night)..."

It is interesting that a tradition says that 'Udayy-ibn-Hatam, one of the believers, once came to the Prophet (S) and said that he had put two white and black threads in front of him watching them, but it (the dawn) did not become manifest for him.

Then, the Prophet (S) laughed so that his holy teeth appeared. Then, he (S) said: *"O' son of Hatam! verily, it is the whiteness of day (dawn) and the darkness of night. Then, begin from this time."* 38

At the end of the night, at first a very weak white colour rises in the sky without extending laterally and appears to be black, presenting itself like an obstacle on the horizon, and is compared to the tail of a fox whose narrow end is onto the horizon and its conical shaped end is in the mid-sky.

This is the 'False Dawn'. But after a while a clear white light appears, rising, filling the horizon with its whiteness, like a white thread stretched beside a black thread, and, thereafter, spreads throughout the sky with a special brightness by which the night ends and the day begins. This is the 'True Dawn' when the Morning Prayer can then be performed.

Piety, the Beginning and the End

It is interesting that in the first verse concerning the ordinance of fasting it was stated that the ultimate aim of it is piety. This very meaning is also exactly repeated at the end of the last verse of this group of verses saying: ***"So that they may guard themselves (against evil)."***

This shows that all of these rites are a means of training the spirit of piety and self-restraint in man in order to produce a faculty of guarding against evil and to feel responsibility before the duties of mankind.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 188

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ
النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

188. "And do not devour your property among yourselves by wrongful means, nor offer it as a bribe to judges, with intent that you may unlawfully swallow up a portion of other people's property, while you know."

This verse prohibits Muslims from committing a very indecent action. It tells them not to swallow up the property of other people unrightfully, and not to earn wealth through a wrong way.

They should be aware not to occupy the belongings of others forcefully and unjustly and then the oppressors refer to the judges so that haply they might give them something as a present or bribe in order to appropriate people's properties oppressively. If so, they have done two great wrongs: devouring

others' rights, and bribery.

"And do not devour your property among yourselves by wrongful means, nor offer it as a bribe to judges, that you may unlawfully swallow up a portion of other people's property, while you know."

The subject of bribery is so important in Islam that Imam al-Sadiq (as) says about it:

"...and bribery in judgment is the same as disbelief in Allah, the Exalted." 39

The holy Prophet (S) is narrated to have said in a famous tradition:

"Curse of Allah be upon the bribee, the briber and the one who makes every effort between them." 40

Something similar to this meaning is expressed in **Surah An-Nisa No.4, verse 29** where it says: ***"...do not devour your property among yourselves falsely, except that it be trading by your mutual consent..."***

The verse under discussion clearly says that if some ones gain a case by giving bribes, the wealth under the suit which they win will be unlawful for them. Thus, the mere apparent winning in the court does not make the properties lawful. This very fact is clearly referred to in a tradition from the holy Prophet (S) where it says:

"Verily, I am a human being (who is commissioned to judge between you through apparent means). If a conflict comes forth to me in which some of you may have stronger evidence than that of the other party, then I will judge in favour of him according to it. So, if I thereby judge for him upon the right of a Muslim, it is a piece of fire. He can take it or leave it off." 41

Bribery, a Calamity

One of the calamities that humankind had been entangled with from the earliest times, and which is running with a more intense speed today, is bribery. It has been one of the greatest barriers of the execution of social justice.

It causes that the regulations and laws, which must basically preserve the rights of the oppressed groups, to be employed, in most societies, to support the interests of the authoritative groups.

It is the rights of the weak, in fact, that law must support, for the rich and powerful people, with the possibilities they have, are always capable to defend their benefits. Evidently, if the path of bribery be opened, laws and judges may produce just a contrary result, because it is usually the powerful ones who are able to spend in bribery.

Therefore, as a consequence, laws can be a new toy for them to continue their Satanic game of

transgression and cruelty against the rights of the oppressed.

For this reason, when bribery influences in a society, it destroys the foundation of the social life of those people. In this situation, transgression, inequity, injustice and undue distinction penetrate in all organs and, as a result, there remains but a bare name of laws and justice.

That is why Islam, showing the foulness of bribery, has condemned it intensely so that it has been counted a great sin in the view of the religion. It is worth noting that the ugliness of this indecent action is often covered in some other fallacious arguments and charming terms.

This status causes that bribers and bribees usually make use of words such as: present, offering, dedication, lip, reward, recompense, and so on, for the bribe. But it is clear that these variations of names do not change the nature of bribery at all, and, however the money paid or taken thereby is certainly unlawful (haram).

It is cited in Nahjul-Balagha that Ash'ath-ibn-Qays went to Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) in a night with a closed flask full of honey paste to give it to him (as) as a present hoping that he would win the case in the court of Hadrat Ali (as). But Ali (as) surprised and violently said:

"Childless women may weep over you. Have you come to deviate me from the religion of Allah? "

"By Allah, even if I am given all the domains of the seven (stars) with all that exits under the skies in order that I may disobey Allah to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from an ant, I would not do it. For me, your world is lighter than the leaf in the mouth of a locust that is chewing it. What has 'Ali to do with bounties that will pass away and pleasures that will not last?... " 42

Islam has condemned bribery in any form and by any name. It is narrated in the history of the life of the Prophet of Islam (S) that once he was informed that one of his governor-generals had received a bribe in the form of a present. Then the Prophet (S) harshly told him:

"Why do you take the thing which is not your right?"

Then the man, apologizing to him (S), said that it was a present. Again, the Prophet (S) expressed:

"If you were to remain at home while you were not a governor from my side, would people present you with anything?" 43

Then, the Prophet (S) ordered the present to be taken and be sent inside the Muslim public treasury, when he dismissed him from his rank.

Even, in order that a judge would not confront with bribery in its hidden shapes, Islam advises that judges would not go shopping in the market themselves, lest discounts unconsciously affect on them and, when judging the suit, they eventually take the side of the giver of the reduction.

How good it is that Muslims, inspired by their heavenly Book, do not sacrifice all their holy things at the foot of bribery!

It is also said that the purpose of the verse is that they do not spend the wealth and properties of each other by means of vain pleasures like gambling or other games.

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as) who said: *"The Quraish used to play games upon their wives, children, and personal wealth, losing them. Allah prohibited them of doing that."* 44

It is better to consider all of these commentaries for the verse, because it can bear the meanings of them all totally.

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1. Al-Kafi, vol. 2; p. 18
 2. Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 2, p. 27
 3. Tafsir-i-Mariqy, vol. 2, p. 69
 4. Tafsir-i-Maraqy, vol. 2, p. 69
 5. Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 100
 6. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 96, p. 256
 7. Ibid, p. 255; aorta is the main artery of the body carrying blood from the left ventricle of the heart to arteries in all organs and parts.
 8. Nahjul-Balagha, Saying No.252
 9. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 96, p. 252
 10. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 7, fasting section, p. 3
 11. Fasting, a New Method in Treating Diseases, p. 65 (first edition)
 12. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 96, p. 25
 13. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 62, p. 290
 14. The Lexicon of the Bible, p. 427
 15. The Old Testament, Book called Deuteronomy, Chapter 9, No.9, p. 222, (English version) printed by British and Foreign Bible Society, AD. 1611
 16. The Lexicon of the Bible, p. 428
 17. Ibid
 18. The New Testament, the Gospel St. Matthew, Chapter 4, No.1-2, p. 983 (English version) printed by London, the British and Foreign Bible Society, AD. 1911
 19. The New Testament, the Gospel St. Luke, Chapter 5, No.33-35, p. 1053 (English version), printed by London, the British and Foreign Bible Society, AD. 1911
 20. Ibid, and the Lexicon of the Bible, p. 428
 21. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 7, section 18, tradition 16
 22. Kanz-ul 'Ummal, vol. 1, p. 178; & vol. 11, p. 445
 23. Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 2, p. 278
 24. Surah Qaf, No. 50, verse 16
 25. Al-'Usul-min-al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 468
 26. Surah Al- Anfal, No 8 verse No 24
 27. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 93, p. 312
 28. Ibid, p. 372
 29. Ibid

30. Surah An-Nisa', No.4, verse 46
31. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 93, p. 276
32. Nahaj-ul-Balagha, Saying No.337
33. Al-'Usul-min-al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 467 (Arabic)
34. Al-'Usul-min-al-Kafi, vol. 2, p.468
35. Ibid
36. Ibid
37. Ibid
38. Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 2, p. 281
39. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 12, chapter 5
40. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 104, p. 274
41. Fi-Zilal-il-Qur'an, vol. 1, p. 252
42. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon, No.224
43. Al-Imam Ali (as), vol. 1, pp. 155,156
44. Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 2, p. 282

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